

PEER RESPONSE VIA GOOGLE CLASSROOM ON AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION COURSE AT SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES –

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Abstract

In teaching English, beside the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), translating is often supposed to be one of the most necessary and difficult ones, for both lecturers and students to face great challenges. Traditional translation classes are boring and stressful, so finding ways to create a more dynamic, positive, and vibrant learning environment has always been one of the goals of translation teachers. Based on previous studies that have shown certain benefits of peer response in the EFL translation and writing class, this study is intended for finding out the effects of applying peer responses through Google Classroom in an English Translation Course at School of Foreign Languages - Thai Nguyen University. 27 students of English Language Teaching undergraduate program participated in this study. They were then given questionnaires to refine and provide information, from which, combined with data from classroom observations and assessment of student's translation drafts, the authors obtained the results of the study. The study shows that, thanks to the application of peer response via Google Classroom, not only the student's motivation, engagement and interaction have greatly increased, but also the student's translation skills have significantly improved. This study is a valuable reference for researchers, teachers of translation courses and others interested in the field.

Keywords: Application, Google Classroom, English Translation Course, Peer response, School of Foreign Languages

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, the role of translation to foster international integration has been extraordinarily enhanced. According to Nguyen, Thi Nhu Ngoc [1], since Vietnam officially became a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), translation has been now considered as an in-demand job in the labor market. Also in this context, translators have been playing an important role in transferring important information from diplomatic, economic and political documents from a source language (SL) to a certain target language (TG), directly affecting the exchange and cooperation process among countries throughout the world. Additionally, the WTO official membership of Vietnam requires translators to equip themselves with more professional skills and knowledge, including language skills as well as socio-economic, socio-political, and cultural knowledge.

Realizing the importance of translators in both the dynamic domestic and foreign labor markets, most universities with foreign languages studies in Vietnam have developed translation as one of the major degree programs, or to the least extent the core courses in their curriculum. However, translation is considered as a challenging subject not only for students but also for teachers because it requires a wide range of specialized knowledge, vocabulary, grammar structure, and deep understanding of culture, context, and good knowledge of the mother tongue Pham Vu Phi Ho [7]. Translation requires a lot of practice and expertise in both the SL and the TG. According to Mossop [5], good translation skills are not an innate talent but an industrious practice. For instructors, Baraniello, V., Degano [2] asserted that even though instructors have a good amount of knowledge about translation theories as well as good translation practice skills, it is not certain that they will help students gain good translation skills. The more difficult problem for teachers is that when commenting on the student's translation, teachers not only have to point out the correct translation, but also help the students create a good alternative; if the translation is qualified, it should be made to become better.

Despite the importance and popularity of translation programs, teaching translation in many universities is still challenging in terms of pedagogy, teaching instruments or teachers' capacity. According to Tran, Thi Thu Trang [8], currently, course books and related materials are not adequately available as some of the course books available are not suitable for Vietnamese context. Teachers then have to design teaching materials based on their own experiences. Therefore, each university has its own teaching model and internal circulation materials. There is no perfect material that suits every situation in any classrooms or all students' needs of learning styles and strategies. In this respect, teachers may use supplementary relevant materials, substitute or even omit trivial or irrelevant elements where the need arises either to comply with student needs in order to compensate for any weak or unsatisfactory points in the textbooks or to meet specific needs in certain teaching situations. In terms of training programs and teachers, Nguyen, Thi Nhu Ngoc et al [1] concluded that the majority of teachers had not yet received intensive training in translation. Many teachers favored theoretical training and offered few practical activities close to translation services in society. Training content often revolved around familiar issues, and did not correspond with market's demand. With regards to using translation strategies in the translation process, Huynh, Van Tai [3] pointed out some limitations of students as follows: Firstly, students often performed their translation work subjectively, ignoring the analysis of the source text (ST). Second, students did not understand the rules of language in each type of ST. Third, they lack the coherence and cohesion in the translated text, and the social knowledge. Pham Vu Phi Ho & Phu Thi Kieu Bui [6] also found that the majority of students felt they were limited in language and lacked effective strategies in the translation process. Nguyen, Thi Nhu Ngoc et al [1] conducted a survey interview with 28 lecturers (teachers) in 10 universities across the country and found that most lecturers provided texts and asked students to analyze the structure, vocabulary and then translated them. In a different way, they asked students to analyze the translation of some phrases or sentences, and then came up with the new translations. Moreover, the majority of teachers provided students with the final translation as an answer for translation exercises; only a few let students give their own answers and discuss together.

In a study on the status of teaching and learning translation at School of Foreign Languages – Thai Nguyen University, where translation is obligatory for all students majoring in English Language, Le, Vu Quynh Nga et al [4] found that teachers used the traditional “read and translate” method in a long time. The most obvious consequence was that many students made poor translation; some even did not dare to translate. Therefore, they would depend entirely on the translation machines if they were forced to produce a translation. Students also lacked a lot of important qualities in translation such as a linguistic and cultural background in both target and source languages as well as an in-depth understanding of translation techniques and strategies. In addition, teachers did not reveal professional certification and skills; they also did not receive further training in the field. However, the authors also found that the majority of students were able to be collaborative learners rather than competitive ones. They enjoyed working in groups and discussing together because they had the opportunity to exchange ideas for better work.

Against the aforementioned background, this study aims to fill in the gap of a lack of study in peer response in translation training. The problem which this study aimed at addressing was the lack of collaborative approaches in teaching and learning translation in tertiary level in Vietnam's context. Various studies have dealt with collaborative teaching approaches through the use of online learning platforms; nevertheless, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the use of Google Classroom in the teaching and learning of translation at the university level in Vietnam has not received much popularity. As such, this paper studies the application of peer response activities in a bilingual English-Vietnamese translation course via the comment function of Google Classroom in School of Foreign Languages – Thai Nguyen University, to explore the effects of peer response on the teachers' teaching and the learners' learning outcomes as well as the impacts it has on the students' abilities to deal with translation tasks.

2. Methodology

2.1. Data source

The population of this research was third-year-students of the Translation module 1 in School of Foreign Languages – Thai Nguyen University during the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020. There were 27 students in an intact group who were enrolled in the Translation module 1. The reason of taking this group was that they studied the translation subject during the time of the study.

The participants had not studied any module related to translation skills before attending the Translation Course 1. In the second semester of the third year, they studied the module English Translation 1 and Interpretation 1 at the same time. They only had 3 hours per week to study the theory and to practice translating in the class, and they had to spend 3 hours each week for self-study or teamwork.

2.2. Data Analysis Method

There are two types of data that was generated in this study, qualitative data and quantitative data. Qualitative data was used to analyze information obtained through open-ended questions in questionnaires and class observations. From there, the data was qualitatively discussed, interpreted, summarized and analyzed. The data was analyzed using sample testing for mean, standard deviation, through data analysis tool pack of Microsoft Excel. The results were then transformed into quantitative measurement and for clear understanding. Additionally, the results of the study are presented using tables, bar charts and pie-charts in order to present the final results to be complete and

comprehensible. Besides, the quantitative approach was used to analyze the data gathered through Likert-scale questionnaire items, marking students’ translation drafts, and closing questions in questionnaires. The relevant evaluations were then used to reinforce the idea of the findings to form the overall picture of the analysis.

3. Analysis and Discussion

3.1. Students’ perceptions toward peer response via Google Classroom in Translation Courses

After applying peer response activity through Google Classroom for 8 weeks, the student was given Questionnaire 2. Through the students’ responses, the author collected data about their assessment and attitudes towards the activity Peer Response and Google Classroom, as well as the application of this activity through Google Classroom in translation classroom.

Table 1: Data of the effectiveness of Peer Response and Google Classroom

No	Statement	Level of Effectiveness					Mean	SD	Meaning
		Very ineffective	Ineffective	Neutral	Effective	Very Effective			
1.	How do you rate the application of Google Classroom into your translation class?	0%	11%	0%	63%	26%	4,04	0.803	Effective
2.	How do you rate the effectiveness of peer response activities in your translation class?	0%	7%	0%	52%	41%	4,27	0.679	Very effective
3.	How do you rate the effectiveness of peer response activities via Google Classroom in your translation class?	0%	11%	0%	52%	37%	4,15	0.759	Effective

Mean Range	Level of interpretation
01.00 – 01.80	Very ineffective
01.81 – 02.60	Ineffective
02.61 – 03.40	Neutral
03.41 – 04.20	Effective
04.21 – 05.00	Very effective

In table 1, we can see the students’ assessment of the effectiveness of Peer Response and Google Classroom. 17 of 27 (equal to 63%) students thought that Google Classroom was effective. Meanwhile, 7 students (26%) thought that it was very effective, and only 3 students (11%) thought that it was not effective at all. The researchers also found that 14/27 students (52%) chose that peer response activity was effective; 11 students felt that this activity was very effective, while there were 2 students choosing “ineffective” for their answer. Related to the effectiveness of Peer Response via Google Classroom, there are 14 of 27 students (52%) found that it was effective; 10 students (37%) thought that it was very effective, while 3 students assessed that it was ineffective. Generally, the student’s assessment of the Peer response activity and the Google Classroom application as well as the combination of these two were “effective”.

Table 2: Data of the factors affecting students’ response to peer’s works

No	Factors	Level of Influence					Mean	SD	Meaning
		Very uninfluential	Uninfluential	Neutral	Influential	Very Influential			
2.1	English grammar	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	5,00	0.0	Very influential

2.2	English lexicon	0%	0%	0%	11%	89%	4,89	0.279	Very influential
2.3	English culture and society	0%	0%	0%	7%	93%	4,93	0.126	Very influential
2.4	Vietnamese grammar	0%	0%	15%	52%	33%	4,18	0.759	Influential
2.5	Vietnamese lexicon	0%	0%	0%	19%	81%	4,81	0.306	Very influential
2.6	Vietnamese culture and society	0%	0%	0%	15%	85%	4,85	0.281	Very influential
2.7	The context of the text in SL	0%	0%	0%	30%	70%	4,70	0.455	Very influential
2.8	The reader/audience	0%	0%	0%	15%	85%	4,85	0.281	Very influential

Mean Range

01.00 – 01.80

01.81 – 02.60

02.61 – 03.40

03.41 – 04.20

04.21 – 05.00

Level of interpretation

Very uninfluential

Uninfluential

Neutral

Influential

Very influential

It can be seen in Table 2 that the students had awareness of what factors that could have influenced their comments to peers' works. The first 3 factors chosen by the majority of students that greatly affect their response making to peers' work are Knowledge of English grammar, English lexicon and Knowledge about English culture and society. In details, all of the students thought that the knowledge of English grammar was very influential in their ability of making comments. 24 of 27 students (89%) thought that the level of influence that English Lexicon has on their comments is "very influential". The remaining 3 students (11%) also said that this had an effect on giving feedback to others' works. Regarding the impact of English culture and society knowledge on their response, 25 students (93%) chose "very influential", 2 students chose "influence". The factor with the most answers chosen by students is Vietnamese grammar. 9 students (33%) said that knowledge of Vietnamese grammar also very influenced their comments, 14 students (52%) thought that it had influences, while 4 students (15%) chose neutral. Vietnamese lexicon factor and the knowledge of Vietnamese culture and society factor had almost the same number of people choosing the answers. There were 22 of 27 students (81%) who agreed that knowledge of Vietnamese lexicon was very influential in making effective comments, 5 students (19%) chose influential. Similarly, there were also 23 students (85%) who assessed that understanding of Vietnamese social culture greatly influenced the process of giving feedback on other people's work, the remaining 4 students (15%) also chose this factor had influence. Regarding the context of the text in the source language, 19 students (70%) thought that it was an influential factor, and 8 students (30%) considered it very influential. The last factor considered was the awareness of the reader/audience, 23 students (85%) said this factor was influential, the rest of the students chose that it was very influential. Overall, the students were aware of the factors that affect the making of comments, in other words, when participating in peer response activities, the students had already known what factors to consider to comment on peer's work. This has shown a change in students when initially, they had not yet figured out how to create a truly effective comment.

Table 3: Data of the impact of peers' comments on students' correction of errors

No	Impact of peers' comments on students' correction of errors	Level of Influence					Mean	SD	Meaning
		Very much	Much	Little	Very little	None			
3.1.	Grammar errors	52%	41%	7%	0%	0%	1,55	2,089	Very influential
3.2.	Vocabulary errors	0%	7%	70%	22%	0%	3,12	1,375	Neutral

3.3.	Tailoring	0%	5%	11%	46%	39%	4,22	0,606	Very uninformative
3.4.	Accuracy	2%	28%	22%	34%	14%	3,30	1,136	Neutral
3.5.	Smoothness	0%	11%	15%	38%	36%	3,99	0,719	Uninformative
3.6.	Completeness	0%	3%	9%	40%	48%	4,33	0,652	Very uninformative

Mean Range

01.00 – 01.80

01.81 – 02.60

02.61 – 03.40

03.41 – 04.20

04.21 – 05.00

Level of interpretation

Very influential

Influential

Neutral

Uninformative

Very uninformative

Table 3 shows the impact of peers' comments on students' correction of different errors. 14/27 students (52%) said that through their peers' feedback, they corrected many grammatical errors, 11 students (41%) commented that they corrected many grammatical errors thanks to others' feedback, 2 students (7%) chose "little" in this case. Regarding vocabulary errors, only 2 students (7,4%) assessed that many of their vocabulary errors were detected thanks to their peers' comments, while 19 students (70,3%) confirmed that their classmates helped them correct a few mistakes in vocabulary, 6 students (22,3%) even thought that they had very little peers' helping to point out their mistakes in vocabulary. Likewise, up to 18 students (66,7%) thought that few classmates helped them correct errors about the appropriateness, the suitability of the translation with the reader/audiences' culture as well as the formality and technicality. The number of students given that peers comments were hardly figuring out this kind of problem in their assignment about is 5 (18,5%). 2 students (7,4%) even found that their peer feedback didn't help them spot compatibility errors, only 2 students (7,4%) chose that they received many comments on the appropriateness from their classmates. The point of view on the effectiveness of peers' comment on Accuracy, Completeness and Smoothness is quite similar. 15, 18, and 16 students said that they received many comments on these issues, respectively. The number of students who rated the comments to help them fix many problems in turn was 10, 9, 8. Only 2 students who thought that peer's comments are less helpful for their correction of accuracy, and 3 students agree with that of Smoothness. Thus, the students received mainly comments about grammar, accuracy, completeness and smoothness. The errors related to vocabulary and appropriateness were rarely discovered by other students.

Table 4: Data of respondent's rating of the convenience of Google Classroom in giving peer response

No	The convenience of Google Classroom in giving peer response	Level of Convenience					Mean	SD	Meaning
		Very inconvenient	Inconvenient	Neutral	Convenient	Very convenient			
4.	Respondent's rating	0%	7%	0%	4%	89%	4,75	0,406	Very convenient

Mean Range

01.00 – 01.80

01.81 – 02.60

02.61 – 03.40

03.41 – 04.20

04.21 – 05.00

Level of interpretation

Very inconvenient

Inconvenient

Neutral

Convenient

Very convenient

In Table 4, we can see students evaluate the convenience of the Google Classroom in making comments on peers' work. 24 of 27 students (89%) said that commenting other's works through Google Classroom is very convenient; 1 students thought that it's convenient, only 2 students who disagreed with others' view when choosing "inconvenient".

Table 5: Data of respondent's rating of the impact of commenting others' works on their self-revision

No	Impact of commenting others' works on their self-revision	Level of Influence					Mean	SD	Meaning
		None	Very little	Little	Much	Very much			
5	Respondent's rating	0%	11%	10%	79%	0%	3,68	1,051	Much influence

Mean Range	Level of interpretation
01.00 – 01.80	No influence
01.81 – 02.60	Very little influence
02.61 – 03.40	Little influence
03.41 – 04.20	Much influence
04.21 – 05.00	Very much influence

Table 5 depicts students' assessment of the impact of commenting others' works on their self-revision. 79% of students (equivalent to 15 students) think that evaluating others' products helped them much in recognizing mistakes in their own work. 10% of the students said that this had little help for them. 11% of students (3 students) found that this helped them very little in correcting their own products.

Table 6: Data of respondent's rating of the peer response's effect on students' next translation

No	Peer Response's Effect on Students' next Translation	Level of Influence					Mean	SD	Meaning
		None	Very little	Little	Much	Very much			
6.	Respondent's rating	0%	0%	22%	70%	8%	3,860	0,894	Much influence

Mean Range	Level of interpretation
01.00 – 01.80	No influence
01.81 – 02.60	Very little influence
02.61 – 03.40	Little influence
03.41 – 04.20	Much influence
04.21 – 05.00	Very much influence

As shown in Table 6, the students' assessment of the benefit of their peers' comments on their subsequent translations. In details, 70% of students (19 students) said that peers' comments helped them much in the next translation. 8% of students (6 students) thought it was very helpful to them. Only 8% students (3 students) thought that peer response had little help for them to have better translation next time.

3.2. Class Observation

The author observed both the process of peer response in Google Classroom and the process of teaching in online classes. The results showed that students were interested in participating in the classroom, ready to support each other, exchanging knowledge and making more progress in their translation learning.

In the online classroom, in the 4th week, the classroom was still teacher-centered mode. The students focused on listening and taking notes on the teachers' comments and explanation. Even though the teacher encouraged the students to comment on other's translation product, the students rarely gave comments (only 3 of 27 students gave feedbacks to their classmate's work), if had, most of them were "no comments", "your work is good", or "the translation is not good, but I don't know what the problem is". When receiving comments from teachers, students automatically accepted and considered it as the only correct answer, without any feedback or any questions.

In the 5th week, the first week of the application of the activity, there were 4 students attending to the discussion section although their comment still were like "the product is good", "I feel that the grammar has problems".

In the 7th weeks and the 10th week (the middle period of the study), there were more students who were confident to make comments and their comments at this period mostly focused on grammar errors, the completeness and the accuracy of translation.

In the 13th weeks, more and more students engaged into the lessons. In addition, the students between groups exchanged ideas on more aspects including grammar, vocabulary, accuracy, smoothness, completeness, ..., although there are few opinions about tailoring. In normal, the students lack understanding in this aspect. Especially, their knowledge of society and culture was little and not comprehensive, if any student had knowledge about this area, that was only one certain aspect, however, students were willing to share with the others.

Not only giving out ideas but students also tried to defend their opinions and raised concerns and questions with teachers, which showed that students had actively studied more and had better knowledge not only about translation but also other fields. They had not received information passively from the teacher anymore.

One thing to note in this class is that the teacher always emphasized to students that there was no single answer to the translation, but whether it was a suitable solution or not and which option was more appropriate, giving the choice was for the student's own decision.

In Google Classroom, peer response activity also experienced dramatic changes throughout the semester.

In the 5th week, the first week applying this activity, students only gave simple grammar comments, and each student's post usually had 2 comments from other members in group, followed by a draft edited according to the comments.

In the 7th week and the 9th week, when the students received feedback from their classmates, they had more questions to clarify the problem. Students started to interact more and more frankly.

In the 11th week, the quality of the comments was better when commenting more about different aspects, although, students still did not get many valuable comments related to the problems of vocabulary and culture. For example, when translating a letter of a child to his father (belonging to the British aristocracy), the student translates "My Dear father" to "Bố yêu quý của con" but no student commented on this error because of their lack of knowledge about British society and culture, especially the British aristocracy, as well as their insensitiveness about the difference between "Cha" and "Bố" in Vietnamese.

However, in the final week (the 13th week) of the observation, appearing a few "arguments" between the members of the groups about which word to choose, and the post's owners making their own decisions about whether to use the word in their translation. For example, in group 2, 3 students argued about using "effect" or "impact", as a result, the author of the post still kept the idea of using "impact" in her second draft because "it is more suitable, and the opinions of you (the other group members) were not convincing enough".

We have also observed that students with better language skills often produced better and more useful comments. Therefore, the process of peer response could be problematic when the student editor and the student translator had different levels of language competence. The low proficiency students often get more benefits from receiving comments from their friends while they themselves have less contribution to making the better 2nd draft of their peers.

In general, through observing the peer response activity on Google Classroom and the online class, the writer had collected valuable data from various sources to obtain the findings mentioned in the next part.

4. Conclusions

The findings have shown that applying peer response through Google Classroom in translation class was effective, both students and teachers had good feedback on this activity. This activity had also changed the traditional translation class, making it more interesting and exciting, students also had the opportunity to learn more from each other as well as developed their own abilities. However, the premise of this was that before applying this activity on the Google Classroom, teachers need to take the time to guide students clearly and methodically, as well as help students get acquainted with peer response and Google Classroom in advance.

In addition, teachers should take the time to control the activities on Google Classroom and encourage students to perform seriously and effectively. Because if they find that the teacher is not checking and monitoring activities, the students will give comments in a superficial way and lacking of contribution.

Moreover, the language proficiency and knowledge of different fields vary among students, so if possible, teachers could swap members in groups after a while, to help students have access to new sources of knowledge, avoiding the case that the better students always do not receive favorable comments. Although there might be a bit difficult when students have to get used to the new member's working style, but it will help this activity be more effective. Teachers need to motivate students and help them overcome this difficulty.

In general, the peer response activity through Google Classroom brings a lot of benefits to the translation class, which is one of the learning activities that teachers can refer to and apply moderately to their classrooms to enhance better translation ability for students.

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